CHAPTER VII

European Trade and African Politics

AT the turn of the seventeenth century Asante conquered Denkyira and made a dramatic entry into the politics of the Gold Coast. From 1701 this hitherto unknown Asante became, politically and economically, the most important single state. Both African and European commercial and political diplomacy were geared to this rising nation, which was soon to dominate the affairs of the Gold Coast. The history of the country became virtually the history of the relations of Asante with its neighbours. In 1701 it became the first inland state to receive an accredited European representative at its court. In that year the Dutch sent the sub-factor David van Nyendaal 'to congratulate Zaay, the king of Asijante'. Nyendaal remained in Kumasi for over a year. It was in 1702 that he returned to the coast.

While it cannot be denied that 1701 was a significant landmark in the history of the Gold Coast, it must be pointed out that it did not immediately establish Asante hegemony over all the states that had formerly been under Denkyira. There remained wars still to be fought, and a system of administrative control to be evolved to suit the expanding frontiers of the Asante empire. But despite the work ahead, it may be said that the basis of contact between Asante and the coast was well established. The Asante advance also completely changed the political *status quo* by giving birth to some far-reaching alliances, which might be said to have been the direct outcome of the fear of the new Asante nation. It is true that some of the alliances had their roots in pre-Asante times, but it was because of the fear of Asante that near-moribund alliances and co-operations were revived. One of the most significant developments resulting from the events of 1701 was the internal unity which manifested itself in the Fante and Akyem states.

Admittedly the political boundaries on the map of the Gold Coast remained, to a large extent, as they had been at the beginning of the seventeenth century, yet most of them remained in name only. In power and substance many small states had become satelites of larger ones. States such as Axim, Ahanta, Eguafo, Fetu, Sabu, Accra,

and others which had been mentioned by de Marees in 1601 could still be found along the coast.[1] In 1629 a clearer and a better sketch of the states of the Gold Coast was made by the Dutch. For the first time twenty-nine inland states were made known. The most imporant of these were Igwira, Inkassa, Wassa, Wanqui, Bono, Twifo, Akani, Akwamu, Quahoe, Inta, and Insoko.[2] The 1629 map appears to have formed the basis of Dapper's description of the Gold Coast in 1668.[3] But neither the anonymous Dutch cartographer nor Dapper had any knowledge of such important states as Adansi, Denkyira, and Asante, which grew into powerful empire-states in the course of the seventeenth century. Barbot, on the other hand, attempted to identify Inta with Asante.[4] It is true that Asante later extended its power into the territory of Inta, but there is no evidence to support the assertion that Inta and Asante were one and the same state.

Two of the inland states, Akyem and Akwamu, that appeared on the 1629 map grew into great powers in the course of the century. In 1629, however, it was Akyem which was well thought of by the European traders; while Akwamu could be summarily discounted as a 'predatory nation' which had little trade, Akyem (Ahim, Akan, Great Akany) was generally described as a 'delijcaet volck en rijk van slaven'.[5]

Although Akyem was commercially important, it traded mainly inland and did not come to the coast. The furthest south Akyem traders were allowed to come was the *A.b.c.* (Abonce) of the 1629 map, which was the market of Accra. The boundaries of Akyem as well as its political might were not resolved by the end of the seventeenth century. This is clearly illustrated by the wild assertions of contemporary writers. Barbot asserted that it extended far inland to North Africa. Bosman, however, did not think that it touched on the Mandinga territory.[6] Both statements have two things in common; ignorance of the real extent of states inland and an exaggerated belief in Akyem as a large state.

Of all the states of the Gold Coast, however, it was Akani (Accany, Hacany, Acany, Acames) that received the maximum publicity from

[1] De Marees, *Beschrivinghe end historische Verhael van het Gout Koninckrijck van Ginea . . .* 1602, *ed. S.P.* l'Honore Naber (The Hague, 1912), pp. 211–13.

[2] O.W.I.C., Luepen, *Collections*, nb. 743, 'Caerte des Landschapen van de Gout Kust', 25 Dec. 1629.

[3] Dapper, op. cit., pp. 433–58.

[4] Barbot, in Churchill, *Collections*, v. 189.

[5] Map 743, Dapper, op. cit., pp. 458–9.

[6] Barbot, op. cit., p. 189; Bosman, op. cit., p. 185.

the Europeans. From the second decade of the sixteenth century the Portuguese initiated the practice of sending regular presents to the king of Akani and other inland rulers. Other nationals who came after them continued the practice in the interest of trade.[1] Akani was particularly singled out for favours because of the great reputation of its traders and the purity of its gold. Its traders travelled far and wide to all the important trading centres, exchanging imported goods for gold and locally made cotton cloths. On the Gold Coast it was far and away the largest exporter of gold. Pure and unadulterated gold was known as Acany (Chica, Sika) gold. The Akani were known to have supplied about two-thirds of all the gold from the Gold Coast.[2]

The commercial importance attached to the Akani traders tended to obscure the political reality. The Europeans were apt to designate all inland traders who came to their forts, from Winneba in the east to Shama in the west, as Akani traders, even though they might have come from many different states. They were unable to ascertain what this state really was. A glance at the 1629 map confirms one's belief in this. All the states in the Pra-Offin-Birim reaches were generally described as Akani. The Akani of the seventeenth century was, if anything, a loose confederation of states with kinship ties.[3]

There is a group of historians who seek to identify the present-day Assin states—Attandansu and Apemenim—with the state of Akani mentioned by the early writers.[4] It cannot be denied that modern Assin formed part of the Akani confederacy of states. Indeed from 1572 the term Assin was gradually becoming known to some of the European writers. It was known as 'Asaas grande' by the Portuguese. It was this same state which Müller referred to as Assingrud. This state only carried, but did not produce, gold. The mines were situated at Tafoe, a few days' journey to the north of Assin. Müller asserts that Assingrud was the 'first land of the great

[1] A. Brasio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africana* (Lisbon, 1952) ii. 246–7, 430. I am grateful to Dr. Birmingham for this piece of information. Pereira, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*, ed. Crone, Haykluyt Society, series ii, ed. Kimble, lxxix, p. 120.

[2] Dapper, op. cit., p. 458.

[3] Ratelband, op. cit., p. xcii.

[4] Reindorf, op. cit., p. 57. Identifies Agyensam, king of Akani as king of Koshea in Assin. Claridge, op. cit., i. 144; Wilks, 'The Northern Factor in Asanti History', *J.A.H.* 2 (1961), 28; Ward, op. cit., p. 97. Ward, however, doubts the existence of Akani as a separate state. Mereyowitz, *Akan Traditions*, p. 96, *The Sacred State of Akans*, p. 21. She identifies Akani with the Akan state of Twifu-Hemang. But this was only one of the states.

kingdom of Accania',[1] which clearly shows that there were other states which formed part of the Akani kingdom. Since Assin was a southern state relatively near the coast, its inhabitants, who were principally traders, were better known along the coast than others to the north of Assin.

Lack of detailed information apart, the fact that all the people who speak Twi and its related dialects were and still are generally referred to as Akans might have led to the ready but mistaken application of the linguistic term to the people. Furthermore, the existence of a state of Twifo side by side with the Twi language easily leads one to think it logical to refer to the confederated states from whence many of the traders came as Akani. It is significant that the lines of migration of most of the modern Akan states are traceable to the area described as Akani in the seventeenth century. Almost all the ruling clans of Akan states such as Akyem, Kwawu, Asante, and Akwamu trace their immediate ancestry to the well-watered regions of the Offin, Pra, and Birim rivers, especially to Adansi and Denkyira. But the absence of the names of such important states as Adansi and Denkyira in the European records must not lead one into thinking that such states had not long existed. They were all embraced by the one known as Akani. What is lacking in the contemporary records is well compensated for by traditional sources.

By the second half of the seventeenth century the presence of many rival European nations on the Gold Coast was adversely affecting the political arrangement of the country. The great Akani confederation was falling apart. The records stress disruptive wars which brought trade to a virtual standstill. There were wars between the southern Akani confederacy of Accany (Assin) and Twifo, which led to a temporary stoppage of trade when the resident Akani merchants were called up inland for service to their state. It was at this time of incessant wars that Adansi was defeated by Denkyira. In 1659 it was reported that the wars in the 'distant districts of Adansee and especially that of Tuyfere [Twifo] with the Accanist' had proved a hindrance to trade. The report continued to assert that 'Adansi had quietly disappeared'.[2] That Adansi ceased to be a powerful state in 1659 is a fact. It is, however, difficult to accept Valckenburg's contention that it had ceased to exist. A few years

[1] W. J. Müller, *The African State of Fetu*, ed. D. Birmingham, 'A Note on the Kingdom of Fetu', *G.N.Q.* 9 (1966), 30–3; Brasio, op. cit., pp. 246–7.

[2] Furley Collections, Dutch Records, Report of Valckenburg to XIX, 1659.

later Müller recorded a war between Alance (Adansi) and Akani over the payment of customs duties and tolls. Between 1669 and 1700 Adansi was overshadowed by Denkyira. It was not until the rise of Asante that it became known again to the Europeans. Adansi might have been the same state that Bosman called Ananse and described, together with Asante, as one of those states that were 'lately known'.[1] It was reputed at this time to be very rich in gold. Although Adansi was not well known to the seventeenth-century writers, traditionally it is one of the most important Akan states. It is believed to be the 'first organised Akan state in the interior from which other states learnt the art of government'.[2]

Adansi and its kindred states that formed the northern part of the Akani confederacy were advantageously sited to tap the gold trade. They occupied the most important source of the gold. (Even to the present day Adansi is the main source of the gold-mining industry of Ghana.) Traders from here had access to the Mande market at Begho, and when the arrival of the Europeans along the coast diverted trade from the north to the south, these states did not lose their position of vantage. Whether by accident or design the states found themselves almost equidistant from the markets of Bono Kingdom and the European establishments on the coast. Little wonder then that the southern Akani state of Assin came to play the middleman's role in the Gold Coast trade, just as the Dyulas and the Hausas did on the south-western and south-eastern termini of trade between the Gold Coast and the medieval Sudanese states.

The disintegration of the Akani confederacy of states is closely tied up with the arrival of many European traders on the Gold Coast and the change in emphasis of exportable commodities from gold and ivory to slaves. The gold from Adansi and its neighbouring states had enabled them to increase their consumption of foreign goods. The desire to increase their purchasing power to acquire more of these consumer goods sharpened the acquisitive instincts of the states and necessitated a change in their political theory, which was based on natural reproduction and kinship ties. The introduction of European goods brought in its train European norms of individualism and economic exploitation. It is significant that the period witnessed an increased supply of firearms, which hastened the disintegration of the system of loose alliances.

[1] Müller, trans. by Birmingham, op. cit., p. 32; Bosman, op. cit., p. 69.
[2] Reindorf, op. cit., p. 48.

There is no denying that all the states that emerged in the Gold Coast, especially the Akan states, resulted from the imposition of the power of one lineage or family on the others. This was mainly achieved through force or diplomacy; but it was diplomacy that held many states together. Prior to the break-up of the Akani confederacy, and the eventual defeat of Adansi in the 1660s, states were built out of groups of kindred interests who settled together for mutual benefits. At times numerically strong groups managed to get themselves accepted as rulers to provide protection for weaker ones. Where there were wars, their effects were less devastating than they subsequently became. With the European economic ideas eating into the social and political fabric of the indigenous population, the old order was ill equipped to withstand the new changes. Thus it was impossible for a state like Adansi, which was traditionally known to have based its fame on the 'wisdom of its great God [Bona] and not on force',[1] to survive. The competitive spirit spelt disaster for loose alliances.

It must be pointed out that in the first half of the seventeenth century, a period of relative political stability, there were wars on the Gold Coast. From the 1630s the Europeans reported inland wars in which they lent a few muskets to their allies. But those wars appear to have been more trade wars disputing rights of way, such as those between Abrem and Fetu, or civil wars over succession disputes. Their political effects were inconsequential, their duration short. On the whole the political stability of the African states was due to the comparative scarcity of firearms. This was because Portugal was forbidden by the Pope to sell guns to heathens and Muslims. The Dutch West Indian Company was also officially not allowed to sell guns. In spite of the sale of firearms by interlopers, their distribution was mainly confined to a few coastal states. From the 1650s, however, the arrival of many different trading nations on the Gold Coast made any restrictions on firearms difficult to enforce. The evidence suggests that Dutch and English interlopers drove a roaring trade in firearms, which the African states began to acquire in large quantities. This resulted in the Dutch Director-General requesting the restriction on the sale of arms to be lifted.[2]

That the injunction against the sale of arms was well observed by the Dutch is evidenced by the list of goods found in the various

[1] Reindorf, op. cit., p. 49.
[2] O.W.I.C. 58, Report from Valckenburg to the XIX, 4 June 1658.

forts. The inventory of goods in 1645 made no mention of guns. The column headed 'ammunition of war' showed a general lack of such ammunition. At Moure and Axim the total number of muskets did not exceed seventy-five pieces; Shama and Accra between them had only eleven muskets. The only materials which might be described as 'offensive weapons' were the 13,767 knives and cutlasses which were requisitioned in 1647.[1] On the whole the emphasis in imported goods was on pewter basins, cotton prints, and such luxury goods as looking-glasses, beads, and carpets. In the 1650s the situation changed.

In addition to the firearms imported from Europe, the Africans supplemented their supply by manufacturing traditional weapons such as 'knives, daggers and swords' from the iron bars that came from Europe. But on the whole it might be asserted that the use of guns had caught on with the local states. The Dutch reported in 1658 that 'only muskets sell well' and that the 'natives take the field with thousands of them'.[2] While the Dutch were prevented from trading in firearms, the English East Indian Company, which took control of English interests between 1658 and 1665, appears to have made huge profits from the sale of muskets. The rate at which guns were brought in by the English so alarmed the African states along the coast that they sought to prevent the excessive flow of the deadly weapons into the interior. In October 1658 the English General Stavely could not openly unload the muskets which arrived on the coast for 'fear that the English would incur the displeasure of the Africans who might even refuse to trade with us'. The fear was justified, because already he had been requested by the Akani traders and the chiefs of the coastal states to stop importing firearms, 'except what the English needed for their own defence'. Apart from the request of the Africans, Stavely justly realized that it was 'death for the Dutch to bring any', and therefore entreated the Directors in London 'not to send any more amunition of war'.[3]

Despite the entreaties from the Gold Coast, the evidence again suggests that guns and gunpowder continued to be sent in large quantities. Between July 1658 and November 1661 the East India Company sent 5,531 muskets and a large quantity of gunpowder

[1] Ratelband, op. cit., pp. 361–84.

[2] O.W.I.C. 58, Report of Valckenburg to the XIX, June 1658.

[3] O.C. 2671, From Gold Coast, Cormantine Castle to E.I.C. 27 Oct. 1658.

to the Gold Coast.[1] Little wonder then that men like John Claessen in the early 1660s could command as many as 2,000 to 4,000 musketeers. Successive English companies continued to send large quantities of firearms to the Gold Coast. The *Arcany Merchant*, which arrived on the Gold Coast in 1668, brought 2,000 pieces of iron bars and 200 muskets. The warehouse journals of the English mention a number of unsold firearms. There were 929 'old and damaged muskets', 38 carbines, 66 musket barrels, and 110 barrels of gunpowder remaining at Cape Coast warehouse in 1679. Two years later the number had substantially increased. There were 148 carbines, 104 musket barrels, 2,115 muskets, and 600 small barrels of gunpowder. The list for 1687 contained *inter alia* 576 firelock muskets and 3,037 matchlock muskets.[2]

The great demand for firearms is further seen from the fact that it became fashionable for African potentates to demand payments due to them from Europeans in firearms. In 1687 the rents due to the king of Fetu and his elders were paid with twenty-six matchlock muskets and barrels of gunpowder. At times the Europeans provided loans to states about to go to war in the form of firearms, on condition that the proceeds from the war—slaves—would be sold only to them. In 1680, for instance, the English entrusted the caboceer Hensaw with 100 muskets, 6 fuzees, and 4 barrels of gunpowder which were 'to be paid for in slaves'.[3] The importation of firearms had so increased by 1680 that the local markets became surfeited with them. The Europeans complained that 'powder has late grown a mighty drug'. The Dutch, whose guns were in demand on the coast, greatly profited by the gun-running. The English were therefore forced to import firearms from Holland, even at the displeasure and to the intense indignation of 'the English shotgun makers'.[4] At the turn of the seventeenth century the Dutch were annually selling about 20,000 tons of gunpowder. The English estimated that to

[1] E.I.C., Letter Books, From London to the Gold Coast ii. 151–2, 167–71, 209, 253–7, 266–9, 308–11, 323–9, iii. 42, 62–6, July 1658, Nov. 1661.

[2] T70/365, R.A.C. to Cape Coast Castle, 12 Aug. 1679; T70/367, Cape Coast Account Book, Nov. 1681; T70/372, Cape Coast Account Book, Feb. 1687.

[3] T70/372/194, Accounts for March 1687; T70/372/129, 10 Nov. 1686. Customs on ships docking at Cape Coast were paid for with 66 matchlocks. In 1687 the Fetu king received three months' advance payment of rentals in muskets and barrels of gunpowder. See T70/372/206, April 1687, T70/365/ff. 51, 80, 92, Mar. July, Sept. 1680.

[4] T70/20/70, Bradley to R.A.C., 7 Dec. 1680; T70/169/28, Petition against the importation of Dutch guns, 17 Oct. 1684.

compete favourably with their rivals in the slave and gold trade they would at one time need about 500 carbines, 100 blunderbusses, 10,000 flints, 5,000 knives, 50 sword hangers, 800 half-barrels of gunpowder, 50 cases of spirits, and 200 tuns of Barbados rum.[1]

By the end of the century the Africans had become very adept in handling guns. It was reported that 'tis not unpleasant to see them exercise their army, they handled their arms so cleverly, discharging them several ways, one sitting, the second creeping or lying'.[2] Their smiths had also learnt to repair the old and damaged guns. 'By new tempering of the lock as to exceed what it was before' they were able to turn 'old guns sold them that would not fire to such perfection as scarcely ever to miss': they kept their guns as bright as silver.[3] Some local chiefs and successful businessmen possessed a few cannon. These were, however, used not for warfare but for firing on ceremonial occasions. The kings of Asebu, Akwamu, and Denkyira, and merchant princes like the Akrosan brothers, John Kabes, and John Konny, may be cited as among those who owned cannon.

With such a massive array of firearms and the willingness of the Europeans to vie with each other in supplying the deadly weapons, warfare, not unnaturally, underwent great changes. The need to subjugate and hold others under tributary status so as to increase one's purchasing power brought about a disintegration of the old political system and ushered in an era of the emergence and growth of politically and economically viable states on the Gold Coast. But surprisingly enough it was not those states which first became acquainted with firearms that led in the empire-building. On the contrary, the immediate effect of the proliferation of firearms on most of the coastal states was to intensify their rivalries and heighten their fissionary tendencies.

There were two main reasons why empire-building on the Gold Coast began from inland and not from the coast. In the first place, the forest zone, especially the areas where gold was readily available, had for a long time been drawn into constant communication with the Sudanese kingdoms in the savannah region. Side by side with trade, the political thinking of the northern empires came to influence them. What was more, the fact that the states were related by kinship

[1] N.B.K.G. 57/37, van Sevenhuysen to the X, 21 June 1700; T70/22/1, Sir T. Dalby to R.A.C., 26 Aug. 1705; T70/5/57, Sir T. Dalby to R.A.C., 8 May 1709.

[2] Bosman, op. cit., p. 156.

[3] Loyer, in Churchill, *Collections* xi. 436.

ties made it easier for the related families to be brought together. Thus with muskets gained from the European trade usually replacing horses as the principal military means of action, territorial aggrandizement for ambitious states became an easy possibility. The need to come together to control the long-distance trade routes became more imperative. It can be said that the political know-how was available and that the introduction of firearms acted as a catalyst in the empire-building. Secondly, whereas on the coast European interference militated against the formation of bigger political units, in the inland states, further away from the immediate scrutiny of the Europeans, the African states who embarked on empire-building were able to present a *fait accompli* which the Europeans could do nothing with but accept as the new order.[1] Of all the many coastal states, it was only Fante which maintained its independence and attempted, however temporarily, to effect political unity and to form the nucleus of an early Fante confederacy at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Of the political developments on the Gold Coast in the seventeenth century, it was the growth of the Akwamu empire which received most attention from the European traders. This was because the area that first came under Akwamu control was the coastal state of Accra. Thus Akwamu itself became a coastal power, enjoying ground rents from the European trading companies. It is therefore understandable that Akwamu should receive better coverage from the Europeans, whose trade was directly affected by its wars. In 1629 Akwamu was merely a nuisance to African and European traders. The contemporary writers summarily dismissed it as a 'predatory nation'.[2] The reason was that Akwamu's early attempts at incorporating other states in its bid for an empire greatly disrupted trade. In 1646, for instance, the Dutch were forced to step in to effect a settlement of disputes between Akwamu and Accra. But the rising Akwamu could not be held in check for long by reconciliatory measures on the part of the Europeans that tended to thwart its ambition to gain direct access to the European forts on the coast. By the middle of the seventeenth century Akwamu's hold on the petty states lying on the trade routes to Accra had been well established. Having thus gained

[1] For more about European interference in coastal politics see Chapter IV, for the effect of the new order on African social and political systems in the eighteenth century see I. A. Akinjobin, 'Dahomey and its Neighbours, 1708–1818' (Ph.D. thesis, London, 1963).

[2] Map 743, 25 Dec. 1629, see Appendix.

in men and raw materials provided by the tributary states, Akwamu embarked on a long campaign of territorial aggrandizement that was to carry its victorious arms to a distance of over 200 miles east of Accra.[1]

Akwamu's hold on the trade routes leading to Accra proved a source of constant irritation to the latter, for, in effect, it meant eventual commercial strangulation for Accra. Akwamu's desire to gain direct access to the coast was in direct opposition to the policy of the Accra kings, who made it a point to exclude from direct contact with the coast all but their nationals. It was in pursuance of such a policy that Accra instituted an inland market at Abonce (*A.b.c.*), a few miles away from its capital. Abonce was the southernmost terminus for all the inland traders.[2] In addition to commercial considerations, practical politics dictated that Akwamu's bid for empire-building should be directed to the south. On its north-western frontier, it would not match its power with the powerful state of Akyem. To the south-west was Fante, which, though politically disunited, could muster enough fighting men to repel any attacks. It was Accra which provided the line of least resistance; hence the Akwamu conquest of Accra.

In 1677 Akwamu launched an attack on Great Accra, the inland capital of Accra. In the war the Ga lost their king but preserved their independence. One of the princes, Ofori, made his escape to Little Accra on the coast, where he established his court, but two years later Akwamu again attacked Ofori in his new capital. But again they were repulsed, thanks to the help offered Accra by the Danes and the English. The English ship *Isabella* was dispatched from Cape Coast to help in 'releasing of Affori [*sic*] King of Accra'.[3] However, the fortunes of war turned a year later when Accra was completely overrun by Akwamu. The successful Akwamu attack on Accra was due, in part, to the help offered them by the English. Accurately sensing the outcome of the war in 1680, the English quickly changed sides and threw in their support for Akwamu. They showered presents on Ahensan (Ansa Sasraku), the Akwamu king who successfully led the attack on Accra. In September 1680 they lent him 100 muskets and four barrels of gunpowder. Before then they had already

[1] For more detailed information on Akwamu see Wilks 'The Rise of the Akwamu Empire, 1650–1710', *T.H.S.G.* 3, part ii (Achimota, 1957).

[2] Map 743, 25 Dec. 1629; Dapper, op. cit., p. 549.

[3] T70/635/12, Bradley to R.A.C., 1679.

offered help. In July when he was in Akwamu, apparently preparing for the war against Accra, the English left him in no doubt of their readiness to lend him support. They manifested this by sending him six fuzees as presents. Perhaps the willingness with which the English went to the aid of Akwamu was due to their desire to see a speedy termination of the Accra–Akwamu struggles, which had interfered with trade. But when the war had ended the Europeans had to wait longer than they had expected for the normalization of relations in the neighbourhood of Accra. They complained that 'Ahensa's continual wars in those parts [around Accra] had adversely affected their trade.' As soon as the war ended, the English hastened to win the support of Akwamu. They quickly dispatched presents consisting of a scarlet cloth and a case of spirits to 'congratulate Ahensaw the conqueror of Accra'.[1] The practice of siding with factions and states in inter-state disputes was adopted by all the European traders. This policy was thrown into relief by the outspoken Sir Dalby Thomas, who, in 1709, bluntly declared his support for the Akwamu despite the help the other companies gave to the Ga. He elected to support Akwamu because he realized that it was 'likely to obtain the better and promises great things in our favour'.[2]

With the defeat of Accra in 1680, Akwamu became a coastal power. Now in direct contact with the Europeans, and enjoying the ground rents accruing from the three European forts, Akwamu was able to embark on an ambitious policy of territorial expansion. Its capacity to procure firearms was only limited by its purchasing power, which had been greatly enhanced by the regular rentals it collected from the English, Dutch, and Danes. In addition to what was due to him, the king of Akwamu's control over the trade routes leading to Accra boosted his credit-worthiness with the Europeans. By the end of the seventeenth century Akwamu had extended its power as far as east of Whydah. Its northern frontiers touched on Kwawu, which was reduced to a tributary state in 1710.[3] On the western frontier it subjugated Agona, and allied itself with the new powerful state of Fante. Its friendship with the rising power of Asante to the north-west of Akyem, and the former's constant

[1] T70/635/51/3, Mar., July, Sept. 1680; T70/16/76, Grenhill and Council to R.A.C., 27 Oct. 1683. Ahensaw may be identified with the Akwamu king Ansa Sasraku, who is credited to have conquered Accra in 1680; T70/370/16/12, Grenhill to R.A.C., 12 July 1684.

[2] T70/5/50, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 8 Jan. 1709.

[3] T70/5/70, 9 Apr., Wilks, 'Akwamu', *T.H.S.G.* (1957), p. 108.

struggles with Akyem, assured it of relative calmness on its western frontier.

Antedating the Akwamu empire was the rise of the inland state of Denkyira. Although Bosman reported that it had risen to power and fame only in the 'past fifteen or sixteen years'[1] (that is around 1684), his statement cannot be wholly correct. It refers only to the last phase of Denkyira expansion, when it turned its attention southwards to control the routes leading to the coast. In fact Denkyira's foundation goes back to the early 1600s, measuring an average of some ten to twelve years for the reigns of its kings, for Boa Amponsem, the king who died around 1692, was the eighth king of Denkyira. Thus by the 1690s the state had been in existence for about a century. That the Europeans remained ignorant of Denkyira until the 1680s was due to the fact that the first phase of its struggles and political expansion was to the north. Thus the absence of Denkyira from the Dutch map of 1629 and from Dapper's work of 1668 is explained. It is conceivable that the cartographer might have heard nothing about Denkyira, nor was Dapper's silence over it surprising, because the latter based his work on materials on the Gold Coast which had been collected in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Correlating traditional with documentary evidence one is able to establish for certain when Denkyira defeated Adansi. Valckenburg's report of 1659 mentioned 'wars in the distant districts of Adansee' that led to its near annihilation. This was probably the war between Adansi and Denkyira, since tradition attributes the defeat to Wirempe Ampem, the sixth ruler of Denkyira.[2] The wars which Valckenburg reported to have led to the fall of Adansi in 1659 were surely Wirempe Ampem's struggles with Adansi. Even before Wirempe Ampem's reign, a firm foundation had already been laid for the administrative and military system of the kingdom.

The task of devising a strong foundation was accomplished by the first three rulers of Denkyira, under whose rule the state was administratively and militarily divided among wing chiefs who in times of

[1] Bosman, op. cit., p. 73. The English edition does not mention the dates.

[2] J. K. Kumah, 'The Rise and Fall of Denkyira' (M.A. thesis, Legon, 1965); 'The Kingdom of Denkyira', *G.N.Q.* 9 (1966), 33–5, Kumah's work is the most up to date on Denkyira; K. Ameyaw, 'Abankeseso and Abuakwa' stool histories collected by the Institute of African Studies, IAS, KA. 9/8 (Apr. 1966). They differ slightly in the names and chronology of the Denkyira kings. Reindorf, op. cit., pp. 41–51. Reindorf's list is completely different from the other two. The present writer has adopted the list of the first two.

war took on the role of generals. Those tasks having been accomplished, it became necessary to devise a means to maintain national unity. Like Asante after her, Denkyira evolved an all-embracing symbol for the whole state. It was because of this that a state stool, *Abankamdwa*, a sword, and *Sasatia*, the executioner's knife, were created as sacred objects. These objects served as a convenient means to render mystical the military power of the state founders, whose power and authority at one and the same time became social, political, and religious. This was a practice which was perfected by the Asante in later years.

The firm foundation laid by the early rulers allowed the subsequent ones to extend the political boundaries of Denkyira and to improve and enrich the material and cultural lives of the kings. These in turn enhanced its fame. While one ruler was said to have instituted a band of singers to glorify and perpetuate the memories of their heroes, another is believed to have added more golden and silver ornaments. With its wealth, power, and glory, the court of Denkyira became the frequent resort of princes from tributary states, who came to serve their apprenticeship in the art of government and to learn court manners. One of such princely students who studied at Abankeseso, the Denkyira capital, under Boa Amponsem in the 1670s was Osei Tutu, the traditional founder of Asante nation. Tradition asserts that Osei Tutu was once a sword bearer at Denkyira.[1] Here in Denkyira, Osei Tutu was said to have met Ɔkɔmfo Anɔkye, who became his right-hand man in the task of nation-building. Whilst at Abankeseso, Osei Tutu is said to have intrigued with Bonsua, a niece of the Denkyira king, and to have made his escape to Akwamu, another powerful Akan state.

Initially Denkyira confined itself to the extension of its territory to the north in order to control the routes which led to the northern markets of Bono-Manso and Begho. It was in pursuit of such an objective that it conquered Adansi and the Asantemanso states that formed the nucleus of the Asante nation. The last twenty years saw the extension of Denkyira's power southwards towards the coast.

Until it undertook this direct imperial drive to the south, Denkyira merchants transacted their trade through Wassa and Assin. This indirect contact with trading centres to the south was dictated by the need to concentrate on the north, where the lack of firearms made conquest comparatively easy; otherwise Denkyira would have had

[1] Reindorf, op. cit., p. 51; Fuller, *Ashanti, A Vanished Dynasty*, p. 16.

to engage itself on two fronts at the same time. At times when conditions were favourable, merchants from Denkyira travelled with 'Accanesse either to Sama, Commendo, Mina or Cape Coast'.[1] Whilst such a policy was convenient in the early years and enabled Denkyira to have a period of consolidation politically and commercially in the 1680s, Denkyira soon came to realize that effective control over the southern routes would be as politically wise as it would be economically advantageous. In the first phase of the southern drive Denkyira defeated Sefwi (Encassar), Wassa, and Aowin,[2] and came to control the westernmost trade route through which trade came to the European establishments between Komenda and Assini. Economically the conquest gave it control of the rich gold mines of the defeated states. The first objective achieved, Denkyira turned its attention to the south-eastern states in an effort to spread its control and influence. In 1688, for instance, it stood ready to assist Agona against Akwamu. Denkyira also tried to overrun Fetu, but its efforts were thwarted by the Europeans, who, as soon as an invasion was threatened, bribed Denkyira to put it off. Its last victorious war in the seventeenth century was fought against King Agyensam of Koshea in Assin (southern Akani). The war reduced Assin to the 'utmost poverty and inability to defend itself'. It also drove her to contract a heavy debt with the English.[3] It enabled Denkyira, however, to safeguard its trade on the routes that reached down to Cape Coast and Moure. On the other hand it proved politically disastrous for the victors. From 1698 the Assin king of Koshea tried to turn the court of Osei Tutu of Asante against Denkyira. His presence at Kumasi might have greatly contributed to the timing of the Asante war against Denkyira (1699–1701).

By 1699 Denkyira stood at the height of its power and fame. It towered over all other states in its social, economic, and political prestige. Its power and authority spread over 200 miles westwards, from across the Pra to the Tano. It buttressed the defences of its eastern districts by pushing its frontiers to touch those of Akyem, its friendly ally. Northwards it had an indeterminate boundary which enclosed much of present-day Asante. Its control over the sources of the gold supply enabled Denkyira to purchase the firearms

[1] Barbot, op. cit., p. 189.

[2] Bosman, op. cit., pp. 4, 68, 70; T70/11/125, Buckeridge to R.A.C., 28 May 1698; T70/374, Cape Coast Account Book, Jan. 1699.

[3] Reindorf, op. cit., p. 57.

needed for the power struggle and territorial expansion in the seventeenth century. Its political power was adequately matched by its commercial influence. The European companies endeavoured to secure its friendship. Official Denkyira policy was also to encourage free trade with the coastal towns.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century Denkyira had taken over from Assin as the most important inland state trading in gold and slaves with the Europeans. Little wonder then that European embassies were sent to Denkyira rather than to Assin. An instance in 1692 eloquently illustrates this assertion. Early in that year representatives from three European companies, the Brandenburgers, the Dutch, and the English, went to Denkyira with presents to Boa Amponsem, 'who desired to live in good understanding with the Europeans'.[1] Just like the Europeans on the coast, Boa Amponsem took positive steps to ensure that Denkyira traders got a fair deal from the coastal traders. This he did by appointing his resident trade representative on the coast. The resident's duty, no doubt, was to see to it that the king and his subjects were well treated by the Europeans and the coastal traders. The post of the king's representative was well respected by the Europeans. For example, in 1698 the English registered their sorrow and sent condolences to the Denkyira king on the death of Ampem. The company sent gifts consisting of rum, gunpowder, and blue cloth to the Denkyira king 'to inter Anpim his resident here . . . whose body was carried up'.[2] The prestige accorded to Denkyira as a commercial nation is seen from the fact that its capital, Abankeseso, was described as an ancient market. It was ready to fight any power which interfered with trade. The war with Assin in 1697 was to open up the trade routes. Denkyira promised after it had defeated Assin that 'nothing shall stop trade which they will encourage'.[3] It therefore becomes understandable that the immediate effect of Asante's defeat of Denkyira was a power vacuum which in turn resulted in the disruption of trade routes. There was no state in the immediate hinterland and on the coast that possessed power and prestige to impose peace within which trade could thrive. Even after fourteen years the Dutch could nostalgically wish for the time when Denkyira provided a framework for peaceful

[1] Bosman, op. cit., p. 219.

[2] T70/373, Cape Coast Castle Accounts, Nov, 1698.

[3] T70/374, Buckeridge to R.A.C., 22 June 1698; T70/11/125, N. Buckeridge, to R.A.C., 28 May, 1 Sept. 1698.

trade. During the Asante attack on Aowin in 1715, the Dutch expressed the fear that trade would stagnate just as it had for some years following the defeat of Denkyira. During that time trade languished on the windward coast.[1]

Denkyira's interest in trade and its inordinate ambition to secure as many European goods as possible eventually led to its ruin. At the height of its power Denkyira controlled the mines of Wassa, Sefwi, Aowin, Assin, and Asante. These states fed the Denkyira treasury with exorbitant and burdensome tributes that were needed to buy firearms so that they could pursue a policy of territorial expansion and suppress revolts in the disgruntled tributary states. If anything had been given back in return, things might have taken a different turn. But this was far from the case. Apart from providing court education for young princes, there is no indication that the tributary states benefited much from Denkyira's rule. It may be argued that the peace imposed by Denkyira rule encouraged profitable commerce for all the states. This might well have been so. But it cannot be denied that what was gained from trade was mostly lost again in tributes to the court of Denkyira. The evidence suggests that Denkyira grew richer at the expense of its tributary states. The war of 1697, for instance, reduced Assin to abject poverty. Power and glory blinded Denkyira to the plight of its tributaries. From its high eminence it 'looked upon all other negroes with a contemptible eye'. It became warlike and overbearing, with the result that it ruined the once prosperous states of Aowin, Twifo, Adom, and Wassa which came under its rule.[2]

A tributary state which prevaricated in the payment of its tributes was quickly visited with Denkyira armies. In 1700, for instance, apparently needing more money for its war against Asante, Denkyira invaded Twifo with a large army and demanded over £800 from Akafo, the Twifo king.[3] This kind of treatment was not calculated to endear it as an overlord to the subordinate states, who 'impatiently wished its downfall'.[4] Traditional accounts agree with the European sources in depicting Denkyira as a hard taskmaster. It was the excessive and insulting tribute imposed on the Asante which led to the Asante war of independence. Denkyira is said to have demanded

[1] N.B.K.G. 82, From H. Harring and Council to X, 9 Sept. 1715.

[2] W.I.C. 917, Sevenhuysen and Council to X, 30 May 1701; Bosman, op. cit., p. 65.

[3] W.I.C. 124, W. Bosman to Director-General Sevenhuysen, 10 Mar. 1700.

[4] Bosman, op. cit., p. 66.

a basinful of gold together with some of the wives of the Asante king as tribute.[1] This provided an occasion for the Asante to assert their independence.

Like Denkyira, Asante had already established itself as master of many of its neighbouring states before it became known to the Europeans on the coast.[2] When it burst the boundaries of the states familiar to the Europeans, the foundations of a strong empire had been well and truly laid. By 1700 Asante, which was 'but lately known' to the coast, was reputed to 'possess more gold than Dinkira'.[3] There is no indication that when Barbot was on the coast in the 1680s Asante was known to the Europeans, for none of the companies recorded anything about it. Like most of the states which were in the interior, its identity was lost in what was commonly called the Akani state. Barbot's assertion that Inta and Asante were one appears to have been an afterthought. He was considering events after, and not before, the fall of Denkyira. Nor is Bosman's statement that all the neighbouring states feared Denkyira except 'Asiante and Akim who are yet stronger'[4] in accordance with the facts. The statement is an *ex post facto* assertion inapplicable to events that occurred before 1700. It was not until the defeat of Denkyira that Asante became known to the Europeans on the coast. Nevertheless it had long established itself as a strong power in the interior.

The foundation of a powerful Asante nation is associated with Osei Tutu. It is not known for certain when he became king of Asante. The most that can be said is that before he became king Asante was a small state composed of kinship groups which had moved northward from Adansi. As a result of the favourable economic position which the Akani confederacy had long enjoyed in both the northern and southern trade, the confederated states had witnessed a phenomenal growth in population and wealth. The overpopulation led to a scarcity of available land for cultivation. Political instability set in, and movements in all directions had started before and after the Adansi war with Denkyira in the 1650s. The movement to the north served a double purpose of satisfying both the political and economic needs of the migrants. Politically stronger and better-organized states to the east and south made it unwise to move in those directions.

[1] Claridge, op. cit. i. Ward, op. cit., p. 118; Rattray, *Ashanti*, p. 290.

[2] For more about the Asante struggles with the early Kwaman states see K. Y. Daaku, 'Pre-Ashanti States', *G.N.Q.* 9 (1966), 10–13.

[3] Bosman, op. cit., p. 69.

[4] Barbot, in Churchill, *Collections* ii. 189.

States like Twifo, Fante, and Akyem were likely to dispute any large mass movement of peoples. To the north, however, the Kwaman states, which were sparsely peopled, offered the line of least resistance. Settling first in the strategically secluded area of Asantemanso, they began to expand their power northwards. Economically the northward expansion gave the emigrants control over the important kola-growing districts, which afforded the most sought-after commodity in the north-eastern trade with the Hausa. The first phase of Asante territorial expansion was therefore directed to obtaining access to the valuable routes leading to Begho in the north-west and Gonja in the north-east.[1] It was in pursuit of the policy of northward expansion that Osei Tutu's uncle, Obiri Yeboa, the Kumasihene, lost his life, and Osei Tutu was recalled from exile and study in Akwamu to become king.

Of all the people called upon to build a nation on the Gold Coast in the seventeenth century, none appears to have been better prepared for the job of kingship than Osei Tutu. He combined the advantages of a courtly education with courage and level-headedness. When his affair with the niece of the Denkyira king forced him to escape from the Denkyira court, he continued his education at the court of Akwamu, another up-and-coming Akan state. Apart from the valuable personal experience he gained from his travels he must have been impressed by the use of firearms and might have been determined to emulate Akwamu and Denkyira on his return home. In addition to whatever experience he gained, he formed a lasting friendship with the famous Ɔkɔmfo Anɔkye, who was to become his adviser in the task of nation-building. Between them, Osei Tutu, the courageous and youthful king, and Ɔkɔmfo Anɔkye, the wise planner and 'the Cardinal Wolsey of Ashanti', laid the foundations of an empire that was to increase in power, fame, and wealth for nearly two centuries.

The two most important and lasting achievements ascribed to Osei Tutu and Ɔkɔmfo Anɔkye are the creation of a unified Asante nation and the assertion of Asante independence of Denkyira. Osei Tutu continued his uncle's war of territorial expansion into the Doma states to the north. He was then left with the problem of

[1] Wilks, 'The Northern Factor in Ashanti History', 'Begho and the Mande', *J.A.H.* II. i (1961); Boahen, 'The Two Faces of Ashanti', *T.H.S.G.* 6 (1963), 127; J. K. Fynn, 'The Rise of Ashanti', *G.N.Q.* 9 (1966), 24; K. Y. Daaku, 'Pre-Ashanti States', *G.N.Q.* 9 (1966), 11–13.

creating and maintaining a lasting and viable independent nation. The Denkyira war provided the cause for achieving both. The need to fight Denkyira served to bring all the nearby states into an Asante confederation. For the union to last, some external symbols were necessary which would be accepted by all. It was in this respect that the resources of Ɔkɔmfo Anɔkye, the priestly adviser of Osei Tutu, were brought into use. Tradition asserts that at a meeting of the Asante chiefs one Friday, Anɔkye caused a stool to descend from the heavens. Thereafter every one of the assembled rulers provided cuttings from his nails to be concocted into a 'medicine' for the consecration of the stool. This stool, which became known as the 'Golden Stool of Asante,' was then presented as the 'soul of the Asante nation'. The king of Kumasi was granted custody of it. In addition to his duties as the Kumasihene he became, by virtue of the Golden Stool, the head of the new nation whose external manifestation of unity was symbolized by the Golden Stool.[1]

Whatever the details of the tradition, its historical implications are clear. From about 1690 the states which had been associated with each other principally because of their common ancestry—mostly of the Oyoko clan—and for self-preservation became united into one nation. The new nation was given the allegiance hitherto owed to the individual states which had come together to form the union. Henceforth the most important single consideration was to fight for, and on behalf of, the Golden Stool. In about 1699 the new Asante nation had to put its unity and strength to test in the war against Denkyira.

Apart from the unity with which the Golden Stool provided the Asante, other external forces helped in the defeat of Denkyira. Most of the tributary states of Denkyira saw in the Asante war an opportunity to settle old scores with their exacting overlord. Like the Asante they all yearned for their independence. Tradition has it that Ntim Gyakari, king of Denkyira, sent a large brass basin to Kumasi and demanded that Osei Tutu and his elders fill it with gold.[2]

[1] Rattray, *Ashanti*, p. 290; Busia, *The Position of the Chiefs*, pp. 96–9; Ward, op. cit., pp. 117–19; Fage, *Ghana*, p. 54.

[2] Reindorf, op. cit., p. 55; Meyerowitz, *Akan Traditions*, p. 95; Ward, op. cit., p. 120; Bosman, op. cit., p. 65. Bosman gives what appears to have been the remote cause of the war. Bosiante (Boa Amponsem) of Denkyira was said to have misused one of the wives of Osei Tutu, when they were sent on a mission to Abankeseso, the Denkyira capital. The enraged Tutu therefore decided on a war against Denkyira.

The excessive demand might have been an attempt by Denkyira to force a show-down with its powerful tributary state, which was extending northwards and consolidating its power. At this time the power of Denkyira over some of its northern tributary states was on the wane. Adanse, for instance, had come under the influence of Asante.[1] Whatever the motives of Ntim Gyakari, he succeeded in precipitating a war with Osei Tutu, his tributary king. His tribute was refused and war ensued.

The theory that Denkyira did nothing to prevent Asante from accumulating arms oversimplifies the political situation and the forces which conspired to effect Denkyira's ruin. The Asante were said to have bought large quantities of gunpowder, 'which the Dinkiras suffered to pass uninterrupted through their country'.[2] The accounts of the European officials on the coast contradict the above statement. States like Twifo, Assin, Adom, and Wassa, which had been reduced to tributary status and had been ruined by Denkyira, considered it their master's turn to taste defeat. They even went further than just to wish. All trade routes from the countries into Denkyira were blockaded in order to prevent the flow of firearms to the court of their overlord.[3] Indeed some of the rulers of the tributary states were known to have actively participated in the war on the side of the Asante. Agyensam of Assin was known to have long been in Asante seeking to get the Asante king to fight Denkyira, which had deprived Assin of its independence in 1697.[4] Not only to the windward side but also in the neighbourhood of Accra the Akyem who were the allies of Denkyira, found it difficult to come by firearms. The result was that while Asante was in a better position to procure firearms through its numerous supporters and well-wishers, Denkyira, on the other hand, was left in short supply of the valuable weapons needed in the war. Thus disadvantageously placed and mostly deserted by its tributary states, Denkyira could not but suffer defeat in the face of overwhelming odds. When battle was joined, Asante defeated Denkyira at Feyiase. The victorious Asante carried the battle into the heart of Denkyira and plundered the country. Bosman computed Akyem losses alone at 30,000 men.[5]

[1] Reindorf, op. cit., pp. 55–6.
[2] Bosman, op. cit., p. 66.
[3] W.I.C. 917, N.B.K.G. 57, J. van Sevenhuysen to the X, 30 May 1701.
[4] Reindorf, op. cit., p. 57.
[5] Bosman, op. cit., p. 67; Reindorf, op. cit., p. 56.

In addition Akyem incurred the enmity of Asante, which was to cost it dearly in the eighteenth century.

Contrary to the common assertion that the Dutch provided considerable material help to Denkyira, one discovers that the Dutch were prepared to do anything to avoid becoming involved in the war. This was because experience had taught them that it would be impossible to get control over the whole trade on the Gold Coast. In the reports before and after the war, it is obvious that they were completely at a loss as to what course to take. They categorically asserted that 'they would steer clear of the troubles'. They would be neutral because they were uncertain of the outcome of the conflict. If the Denkyira became victorious, 'as they had always been', they forecast ruin for all the allied states; that would be the end of profitable trade. In the interest of trade, however, their sympathies went to the Asante, who were known to possess more and better gold than Denkyira. This covert support for the gold-rich Asante may be discerned from the Director-General's letter in 1701, which, in happy tones, reported the defeat of Denkyira. It is doubtful if they would have been so elated if they had offered any help to Denkyira. To derive the maximum benefit from the changed political situation, the Dutch quickly dispatched an emissary to the 'gevresde Asjantijnse Caboceer Zaay' with costly presents and messages of congratulations.[1] The Dutch move gained them a commercial advantage over their rivals. The English therefore made attempts to outshine them in showering gifts upon the king of Asante, who was described as the 'great governing man in these parts, whose friendship was worth preserving'.[2]

However, 1701 did not establish complete Asante control over the former tributary states of Denkyira. Despite this, the political effects of the 1701 war were still very far-reaching. It led to the revival of old and near-defunct alliances. It also created new groupings. A few of the alliances were initiated by the Europeans in order to ensure for themselves stability in trade; others were started by the Africans themselves; but all had one motivating force—namely the fear of Asante. Two instances may be cited to illustrate the first group of alliances. In 1700, when the wars in the interior had virtually

[1] W.I.C. 917, J. van Sevenhuysen to the X, 30 May, 16 Nov. 1701; N.B.K.G. 57, J. van Sevenhuysen to the X, 16 Nov. 1701; N.B.K.G. 233, Instructions to D. Van Nyendaal, 9 Oct. 1701.

[2] T70/26, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 22 Oct. 1708.

halted trade, the Dutch quickly and successfully effected an agreement among some of the affected states. They gathered the rulers of Asebu, Fetu, Twifo, Akani, and Kabestera together to promise to grant free passage to traders going through their states. This was found necessary because, despite the drive which Asante had shown, its traders were finding it increasingly difficult to gain free access to the sea. Thus the agreement greatly benefited the Asante traders, who were appearing in large numbers on the coast.

In 1701, when the Dutch were already in direct contact with the Asante court, the English, their closest rivals, endeavoured to score a diplomatic victory over them. They invited representatives of Asebu and Fetu to Cape Coast 'to hold a palaver to have a firm alliance with the King of Ashantee'.[1] The English attempts bore good fruit, because it was being reported that traders from Asante were always appearing first at Cape Coast and other English forts before they left for the Dutch. The primary motive of the Europeans in seeking unity among the Africans was commercial; none the less, such alliances provided incidental political advantages. But since their stimuli were external and foreign they were not long in falling apart.

On the other hand, alliances effected through mutual desire for self-preservation between neighbouring states were much more beneficial and lasting. At one time or another practically all the states of the Gold Coast were involved in some form of grouping. The most significant ones were between Akyem and Denkyira, Akwamu and Asante, and Fante and Akwamu. The rise of Fante between 1700 and 1720 may be cited as far and away the most significant development on the coast. Before 1700 observers had deprecated the disunity in the Fante state, which had atrophied in its power both latent and real. They observed that if the Fante were to be united, the 'circumjacent countries could soon find their power by the interruptions into their territory'. It was also noted that the Fante possessed a debilitating tendency whereby 'a chief sometimes would scarce own the Braffo for his superior'. Such a practice impeded the unity of the state. However all agreed that Fante's military prowess was better developed than that of most of the states. In times of war it could marshall over 10,000 well-armed men.[2] At no time did the disunity become so pronounced as during

[1] N.B.K.G. 57, W.I.C. 917, J. van Sevenhuysen to the X, 25 July 1700. T70/377, Cape Coast Account Book, 17 Nov. 1701.

[2] Bosman, op. cit., p. 49; Barbot, op. cit., p. 175.

the period of the Dutch–Komenda war. Both the Dutch and the English exploited the factions in the Fante state. When the Dutch paid money to hire the Fante to fight for them, the Fante gladly allowed themselves to be bought off by the English. By 1706, however, the picture of a disunited Fante had undergone a change.

The main factor that made the Fante hasten to unite was the political change that was brought about by the Asante intrusion into the politics of the southern states. But it was no wonder that, of all the coastal states, Fante should become strong and powerful at the beginning of the eighteenth century. As far back as the 1640s, the Fante had pointed out that they would not grant control of their land to any European. Thus their state, especially Anomabo, became the haven for interlopers. They therefore benefited more than most of the coastal states where trade with interlopers was forbidden. Their wealth enhanced and increased their power, which also enabled them to stand up against the companies and to enforce laws on Africans and Europeans alike. Bosman pithily pointed out the exact relationship between the Fante and the Europeans as one in which the Dutch and the English had an equal power, 'that is, none at all'.[1] To other European visitors and writers the Fante proved as troublesome as they were headstrong. In the eighteenth century the Fante sank their differences and sought to extend their powers to embrace other states primarily to preserve their privileges against imminent Asante encroachment. Other weaker states were also ready to come into union with Fante. The first and firmest of such allies was Assin. Fante was ready to help fight those who threatened the independence of its ally. When in 1706 the Kabestera, Fetu, and Asebu states threatened an attack on Assin, Fante support was quickly lent the latter. This timely intervention saved Assin from utter defeat. The tables were turned on the allied forces, which were completely routed. The king of Asebu lost his life in the encounter, while Ahen Pompa of Fetu was captured by the Fante troops.[2]

The main consideration which drew Fante to Assin was political. In that state Fante found a buffer for defence against the Asante. But in spite of the need to preserve the independence of Assin, Fante was known to have provided lukewarm support in the initial stages. Placing immediate economic gains above ultimate political benefits, they first allowed the Asebu to capture a number of Assin

[1] T70/5/63, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 21 Aug. 1709; Bosman, op. cit., p. 49.
[2] T70/5/40, Hayes, Chaigneau and Hicks to R.A.C., 23 Dec. 1706.

to be sold as slaves.[1] After three years, however, Fante came to realize that such half-hearted support of friends and allies was unlikely to further their interests. Small wonder then that from 1710 the Fante took the alliance seriously. After all, it would be to their mutual advantage if they, as powerful coastal middlemen, were to forge a lasting friendship with the Assin, who in all respects were their counterparts in the interior. Close co-operation would redound to each other's advantage, politically and commercially. With this aim in view, Fante fully and unreservedly supported the Assin in their troubles with Twifo. In the troubles between the two states, both sides turned to their allies for help. Whilst Twifo solicited help from the Dutch, with whom it had entered into a defensive and offensive alliance in 1690, Assin turned to Fante. Akafo, king of Twifo, requested a loan of £800 from the Dutch to enable it to engage help from Akyem, Denkyira, and Asante. The Dutch were embarrassed by the Twifo request. They realized that despite the obligations which the 1690 agreement placed on them, as well as the favourable geographic position of Twifo, they could not readily accede to the request. One reason was that they had learnt that it was not possible to recover such debts from the African states. But the weightier reason was the desire not to offend the Fante, who were friends of the Assin. If the Fante got wind of such help the Dutch were very likely to be turned out of their state. But the Dutch could not go back on the terms of their agreement with Twifo. They discovered a compromise solution likely to satisfy their friends. To prevent the deed from becoming known to the Fante, it was agreed that Twifo should provide sureties in property instead of in men, who would be easily noticed by Fante.[2] That the Europeans were unwilling to incur the displeasure of the Fante was due to the favourable and privileged political position which they enjoyed among the coastal states.

There was yet another instance during the struggle between Assin and Akyem in 1715 that clearly reflected the power of Fante. For a long time Akyem and the southern part of Akani (Assin) had been constantly at variance. This was due to the fact that Akyem 'pretended an overlordship over Acany'. In addition to their common

[1] T70/5/38, From Cape Coast to R.A.C., 24 Feb. 1704.

[2] W.I.C. 122/36, Agreement between N. Sweerts and Acafu, King of 't'Juffer, 16 Jan. 1690; W.I.C. 124, From Engelgraaf Robertz at Chama to N. Harring, 27 July 1713; W.I.C. 122/72, Agreement between E. Robertz and Akafo of Twifo, 30 July 1713.

boundary, the Akyem and Assin had rival interests, since both were long-distance traders who carried their goods far into the interior.[1] Each desired to monopolize this carrying trade, and so it became inevitable that their interests would collide. Their rivalry was further shown by the fact that at the turn of the century they opposed each other in the Asante–Denkyira war. The Assin fought for the Asante against the Akyem and the Denkyira. 1715 saw an open and direct conflict between the two states.

In April of that year the Assin fled their country to seek refuge with their men and women in Kabestera. The flight was followed by rumours of impending Akyem attacks. But before the truth of Akyem preparations for war could be established, the Fante had already thrown in their lot with Assin. At a meeting of the Fante chiefs at Abora, it was unanimously agreed to help Assin. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, they felt obliged on account of their long-standing friendship to offer help. Secondly, and much more importantly, the Fante believed that they would become the next target of the Akyem. The fear that their safety was at stake was further strengthened by the unfounded rumours that the Asante were openly helping Akyem.[2] One would expect the Assin to have readily accepted any support from the Fante. Far from it. They hesitated to trust themselves to their friends. Their reluctance stemmed from the double-facedness of the Fante in 1707, which had cost them dearly in men and prestige. The genuine fears which Fante had about the Akyem forced them to be earnest about their help to Assin. After several meetings and consultations, the Fante and Assin met at Abora and 'drank fetish' to stand faithfully by each other.

It was not only Fante that was scared by the impending Akyem attack of Assin. Fetu felt likewise. The king and elders of Fetu found it necessary to sink their differences and to consult with the Fante in their own defence. Thus the nucleus of a Fante confederacy came into being, with Abora as the confederacy headquarters. At a meeting in June 1715 between Ahen Domine of Fetu and the Fante chiefs, both sides agreed on a defensive alliance. That Assin and Fetu should turn to Fante is evidence of the power which the latter came to wield. Even better evidence of this is afforded by the action of

[1] Dapper, op. cit., p. 459; Barbot, op. cit., p. 189.

[2] N.B.K.G. 82, From Cormantine to Elmina, 19 Apr., 5 May, 12 July, 28 Sept. 1715. The allegation that the Asante were supporting Akyem is difficult to substantiate. In all probability it was merely meant to whip up support for the Fante cause, since Asante and Akyem were preparing for war at the time.

Akyem itself. Like the other states, Akyem felt the friendship or the neutrality of the Fante essential for its own cause. Therefore an embassy from Akyem also arrived at Abora to ask the assembled Fante rulers to refrain from supporting the Assin. Akyem assured Fante that the struggle would not be carried into its territory. But the assurances were unavailing. Fante would not be so easily put off when its power was now keenly competed for. After recounting its long and close association with the Assin, the council at Abora warned Akyem that it would consider an attack on Assin as an unfriendly act, and would consequently do everything to repulse it.[1] The warning had the desired effect, since the threats of Akyem attacks never materialized.

Already Fante influence had reached eastwards to Agona and even beyond, to Akwamu. In the struggle against Assin the Akyem tried to enlist the support of Agona. Promises of presents and help against Akwamu by Akyem did not convince the Agona. They would not support Akyem because, as they pointed out, they already had a long-standing friendly relationship with Fante in which they had even sent their prince to Abora as a hostage. In need of allies in the struggle against Assin, and partly aware that the Fante were in league with their great rival, Akwamu, and perhaps because of an impending war with Asante in 1715, the Akyem allowed the projected attack on Assin to peter out. Nevertheless, the alliances that were forged as a result of, and during the period of, the struggle clearly indicate the changed nature of warfare and politics on the Gold Coast in the second decade of the eighteenth century. Henceforth attacks on one state involved many others, who came to the assistance of their allies in the expectation that similar help would be given when and if it was needed. The need for helpful and powerful allies among the local states did not go unnoticed by the European writers. Although if neither side had been helped by allies, it was known that Akyem would easily have defeated Assin, the part played by allies changed matters. The contemporary writers were sceptical of the outcome if Akyem fought alone. They wondered how, with such an array of help for Assin from Fante, Fetu, Akron (Gomua), Agona, and Akwamu, the Akyem, who only had Adom and Kabestera for allies, would be able to stand up against their enemies.[2] Luckily for Akyem no battle was fought.

[1] N.B.K.G. 82, Letter from Cormantine to Elmina, 28 Sept. 1715.
[2] Idem, From d'Outreau to Elmina, 5 Nov. 1715.

That Akwamu should come to the assistance of Assin against Akyem was significant. It may be said that it was because of Akwamu threats on its eastern borders that Akyem never attacked Assin and its allies. For a long time relations between Akyem and Akwamu had been those of constant struggle for power punctuated by periods of uneasy truce. Their rivalry dates back to the early period of Akwamu expansion. Akyem resented the present of a powerful Akwamu on its eastern border. It therefore did all it could to thwart the efforts of Akwamu in its empire-building. In 1659, for instance, Akyem fought on the side of Accra against Akwamu.[1] Traditionally therefore Akyem and Akwamu were rivals. It was due to the dominance of the powerful and numerically strong Akyem on its western borders that Akwamu directed its search for an empire to the east and north-east. With such a history of struggles behind them, both sides eagerly awaited the slightest favourable opportunity to embarrass the other. Such chances occurred whenever one side was at war with another state. To win the support of the rival's enemies would naturally increase one's own fighting force. In the 1680s it was Akwamu intervention and threats that prevented an Akyem alliance with Agona. To eliminate threats from the Akyem and to be assured of Agona help, Akwamu reduced Agona to dependent status.[2] The reduction of Agona by Akwamu made it difficult, if not impossible, for the Akyem to obtain firearms from the Europeans at Winneba. It is not unlikely that the cordial relationship that long existed between Akwamu and Asante was seen primarily by the former as a protection against Akyem. Had the Akyem and Asante come together, Akwamu would surely have been ruined. Without doubt the Asante alliance safeguarded Akwamu's north-western frontiers from any sudden Akyem attack. What was more, the wars between Akyem and Asante diverted Akyem from any serious attacks on Akwamu. By winning over Agona, Akwamu succeeded in practically sealing off any contact by the Akyem with the coastline between Winneba and the Volta. Akyem merchants could only trade at the sufferance of Akwamu.

Akwamu's policy towards the gold-rich Akyem naturally irritated the Europeans. To the latter, it was essential and beneficial to have direct contact with the Akyem. It was with such an aim in view that

[1] O.W.I.C. 13, Valckenburg's Manuscript from G.C. to XIX, 1659.

[2] Wilks, 'The Rise of the Akwamu Empire, 1650–1710', *T.H.S.G.* 3. ii (1957), 102–32; Bosman, op. cit., p. 61.

in 1703 the Dutch contracted to supply arms and men to Akwamu in return for a free passage for inland traders to the coast. While the Akwamu very much wanted the Europeans to adhere to their part of the terms of the agreement, they themselves were reluctant to honour their part of it. If all inland traders were given easy and free access to the coast, the middlemen's share of profits would no longer come to Akwamu. They would be diverted into the hands of the traders from the other states. Nor did they even respect the clause which asked Akwamu to refrain from wars likely to disrupt trade. Though peace would encourage profitable trade in gold and ivory, it was inimical to Akwamu's political ambitions. Akwamu continued its struggle with Akyem, and even added Kwawu and other states to its expanding empire. Two years after the agreement of 1703, Sir Dalby Thomas, with his characteristic impetuosity, became so exasperated by the behaviour of the Akwamu that he expressed the desire to find a suitable means to 'bring the Akyem on the young hairbrained king of Akwamu'. Such a measure would bring peace and tranquillity; and also would be the 'best thing done on this coast for several years'.[1] But it was only four years later that the Akyem made any serious preparations against Akwamu. Since Akwamu at this time was suspected to be favouring the Dutch, the English grew enthusiastic about the imminent Akwamu–Akyem war. They optimistically expressed the hope that the Akwamu king 'would soon be humbled'.[2] The hope was misplaced. An Akyem defeat of Akwamu was to be delayed for another twenty years.

In the meantime, each state looked for an opportunity to humble the other. After 1700 Akwamu needed to be much more vigilant against any attacks from Akyem for this was now fast becoming a united state. Like all the other states that had grown conscious of their own safety and their capacity for a successful united endeavour, Akyem came to realize that its interests would be better served if its various sections could all come together. In the seventeenth century the Akyem, like the Fante, had been riddled by internal strife. Barbot in the 1680s had noted several changes and revolutions in their government '. . . [which] render it less formidable to its neighbours'. Bosman confirmed this observation. He diagnosed the cause of Akyem troubles as Akwamu's clever exploitation of the factions in the state. As long as Akyem remained disunited and weak, it

[1] T70/1184/4, Abstract of Letters from Cape Coast to R.A.C., 1 Jan. 1705.
[2] T70/5/63, Abstract of Letters to R.A.C., 22 Oct. 1709, 30 Jan. 1710.

posed no great threat to the rapidly expanding Akwamu empire. Thus the kings of Akwamu employed 'fair words and presents to sow Dissension betwixt the governing men of Akim'.[1] The most significant development in Akyem at the beginning of the eighteenth century was the removal of the bad blood that had long existed between the 'governing men'. And this was resented by Akwamu. The two Akyem kings, Ofosuhene Apenten of Kotoku and Ofori (presumably Ofori Panin) of Abuakwa, sank their differences and pooled their forces against Akwamu. Strengthened by their unity, the two kings planned a joint assault on Akwamu and Agona in 1715. Such a war, if successful, would remove the economic strictures that Akwamu's restrictive practices had brought on Akyem traders. Akyem became determined as never before to forge a direct contact with the Europeans on the coast. Obviously unaware of the background diplomatic discussions and schemings, and understandably ignorant of the kingship ties between the two Akyem states, the Dutch, who had long known the Akyem as a divided people, expressed great surprise at the news of the union. It is not known for certain whether it was because of, or despite, the union between the two states of Abuakwa and Kotoku that Apenten of Akyem Kotoku decided to sever his relations with the king of Akwamu. The most that can be said is that the Kotoku king was reported to have provoked the Akwamu into war by sending back his wife, the Akwamuhene's daughter, to her father.[2] The affront provoked the Akwamu to prepare an attack on Akyem. Before matters could be brought to a head, however, more serious developments to the north had forced the Akyem to seek a truce with Akwamu and Agona. Asante armies were getting ready for Akyem.

The first open breach between Akyem and Asante was in 1701. In that year Akyem supported Denkyira against Asante. The war was costly in lives for Akyem and earned her the unforgiving displeasure of the Asante. What was more, Akyem's alliance with Denkyira nearly upset the political calculations of the Asante when, soon after the Denkyira war, a joint action by the defeated states reversed the verdict of battle and temporarily defeated the Asante

[1] Barbot, op. cit., p. 189; Bosman, op. cit., p. 69. Bosman asserted that Akyem pretended to a feudal right over Akwamu, and demanded an annual tribute. Although Wilks does not accept Bosman's claim, it substantiates the traditional view expressed by Reindorf that Ansa Sasraku of Akwamu settled first in an Akyem country after he had been driven away by the Denkyira. Asamankese, the first Akwamu capital, is in Akyem Abuakwa.

[2] N.B.K.G. 82, From D'Outreau at Apam to Elmina, 5 Nov. 1715.

forces.[1] The fear of a joint attack on Akwamu rose high, but it never materialized. Eventually the Asante subjugated Akyem and imposed a heavy fine on it. The fine was ignored. The Akyem then began to molest Asante traders who passed through their country to the coast. These petty annoyances made another Asante attack on Akyem inevitable. Luckily for Akyem, Asante relations with Akwamu were deteriorating. Akwamu began to resent Asante interference in its politics. Asante flirtations with Agona provoked Akwamu against her. The Agona obviously resented their subordinate role in their relations with Akwamu. They therefore looked to Asante to help them retrieve their independence. Akwamu was displeased by the overt encouragement which Asante gave to its vassal state. Smarting under a national insult, Akwamu temporarily relaxed its policy of economic control over Akyem, possibly to force a show-down with Asante. In December 1715 Akwamu agreed, in return for the sum of £1,600, to allow Akyem traders direct contact with the Europeans at Accra. For ten months the Akyem were able to purchase firearms from the forts for their war against Asante. In one instance 200 Akyem traders who arrived at Accra demanded nothing but firearms. They made no bones about the fact that the firearms were needed to fight the Asante.[2]

Before long, however, the uneasy truce between Akyem and Akwamu had ended. Akwamu once again began troop movements against Akyem. In March 1716 troops from Fante, Assin, and Akwamu converged on Agona ready to launch an attack on Akyem. As was to be expected, the troop movements and the war scare disrupted normal trade. But since the European traders were expecting rich yields of slaves out of the war they waxed enthusiastic about it. Side by side with the immediate economic profits that were expected, it was believed that the Akyem would be able to defeat the Akwamu, whose policies in relation to the inland states tended to stifle profitable trade.[3] The European expectations of an Akwamu defeat were strengthened by the attitude of the Ga, who were one of its tributary states. They refused to assist the Akwamu in the impending war. The Dutch were also reluctant to honour their 1703 agreement with Akwamu, and refused to lend them any support

[1] Furley Collections, Christiansborg Journal, Dutch and other European records, 1699–1715; May 1702.

[2] N.B.K.G. 82, J. van Dijk to Elmina, 10 and 13 Oct., 31 Dec. 1715; M. Priestley and I. Wilks, 'Ashanti Kings', *J.A.H.* 1 (1960) p. 88.

[3] T70/6/135, Phipps and Bleau to R.A.C., 30 Mar. 1716.

either in men or munitions. They even equivocated in granting the Akwamu king's request to release Amo, an Akwamu prince who was then a broker in their service, to fight for the king. Even Amo's willingness to help Akwamu was dampened by Dutch threats to hand him over to the Akyem in the event of an Akwamu defeat.[1] After an indecisive battle the Akyem beat an ignominious retreat, to the intense disappointment of all their friends and well-wishers, especially the English. The flight of the powerful Akyem led to a number of speculations in trading circles.

The first explanation adduced for the Akyem withdrawal was that the rainy season was ill suited for warfare. It was held that those needed to bear arms also had to cultivate the fields. They therefore had to abandon their war designs in order to take advantage of the rains to work on their farms.[2] This might well have been partly true. But the main reason for the sudden departure, as Baillie saw from far-away Komenda, was an Asante war which was threatening. Baillie had long suspected the reason for the inordinate desire for firearms by the Asante merchants. His inquiries about their probable target yielded no results, because the Asante maintained strict secrecy. When he got to know that similar demands were made by the Akyem on the leeward coast, especially at Accra, he concluded that an Akyem–Asante war was imminent.[3] His interpretation received corroborative evidence from other sources. Butler, the Dutch chief factor at Axim, also had the impression that the sudden departure of Asante and Wassa troops supposed to have been sent to punish John Konny of Ahanta was due to the need to have the full strength of the Asante fighting forces available for an impending war with Akyem.[4] The fear of the Asante, and the need to have provisions, compelled the Akyem to drop the attack on Akwamu for the time being. Although the Asante did not strike before 1717, sending the men back home provided a double advantage. They worked to ensure a regular supply of food, while at the same time they made themselves readily available to defend the state in an emergency. Despite the fact that the war was two years off, skirmishes arising from the molestation of Asante traders became rampant. In 1716, for instance,

[1] N.B.K.G. 82, From Boehaven at Breku to Elmina, 10 Mar. 1716; From J. Dyke at Accra to Elmina, 13 Mar. 1716.

[2] N.B.K.G. 82, From Hendricks at Apam to Elmina, 6 and 10 Apr. 1716.

[3] T70/1464, Komenda Diary, 27 Apr. 1715.

[4] N.B.K.G. 82, From Butler to H. Harring, 13 Dec. 1715; Director-General's report, 15 Dec. 1715.

Asante traders passing through Akyem were intercepted and their goods seized. Preparations for war on both sides were therefore stepped up. The Europeans noted early in 1717 that the 'Ashantis and Akims are resolved on a war with each other'.[1] In October 1717 the Akyem inflicted on Asante the greatest disaster in its history. Covertly assisted by the Akwamu, who, as has been pointed out, resented the two-facedness of the Asante towards them, the Akyem ambushed and killed (? Osei Tutu) the king of Asante.[2]

The Asante drive to the south after the Denkyira war was not only against Akyem. From 1701 Asante was committed on several fronts. Some of the wars appear to have been purely punitive attacks on Denkyira's supporters in the 1701 war. A few were waged to secure free passage for Asante merchants; others were in pursuit of a policy of outright expansion. The expansionist wars were first directed against states further away from the coast and thus did not greatly disturb the pattern of trade, but the punitive ones did. Of the punitive wars the one against the Aowin in 1715 was the most significant. In October 1715 rumours became current on the coast that the Asante had been defeated by the Aowin. The Asante–Aowin war was the outcome of a long struggle by the Asante to control the gold and cloth-rich states to the west and north-west. After the Denkyira defeat the Asante turned their attention to securing control over the routes which led to the Mande market at Kong. In August 1715, for instance, it was reported that the Asante had captured several slaves in their war against 'Gingebra [? Genejene, Gonja], a country beyond Ashantee'. Another report held that a large contingent of Asante troops had been sent to a country between Asante and Aowin and had destroyed the capital, Affindie Coco[3] (Ahwene Koko, the first traditional capital of Wenchi). After the fall of Ahwene Koko a number of Asante soldiers were said to have defected with their booty to Aowin.

[1] T70/6/48, Phipps to R.A.C., 6 Feb. (f. 53), 25 Sept. 1717; T70/6/75, Johnston to R.A.C., 26 May 1718.

[2] N.B.K.G. 84, Letter from Accra to Elmina, 30 Oct. 1717; Report of Director-General and Council, 4 Mar. 1718; Priestley and Wilks, op. cit., pp. 88–90. They assert that it was not the popular Osei Tutu, but an unknown Asante king who was killed.

[3] T70/1464, Report from Baillie at Komenda, 4 Aug. 1715; N.B.K.G. 82, Report from Butler at Axim, 10 Oct. 1715; Paul Ozanne, 'Ahwene Koko: Seventeenth-Century Wenchi', *G.N.Q.* 8 (1966), 18; K. Y. Daaku, 'The Fall of Ahwene Koko and its significance in Asante History', *G.N.Q.* 10 (1968).

Such defections could not be tolerated in the Asante army, and those who tried it were instantly hunted and punished. By providing protection for the group, the Aowin were wittingly courting Asante displeasure and openly inviting an invasion. Even if the defection of the Asante into the state had not occurred to provide an immediate cause for an attack, it would not have been long before the Asante invaded Aowin. Since 1701 Aowin had served as a refugee centre for many of those who escaped from the states that were being brought under the Asante hegemony. People from Denkyira, Wankyi, and Sefwi had been readily welcomed in Aowin.[1] The attack which the Asante, under their great general Amankwa Tia, launched in 1715 was therefore to serve a double purpose: first, to punish Aowin for its unfriendly acts towards Asante; secondly, and more importantly, to recapture the Asante refugees. Ever conscious of the threat of an Asante invasion, the Aowin had prepared for such an eventuality. They increased their number of firearms. European traders who arrived on the windward coast found all their guns readily bought by the Aowin. The Aowin were therefore able to provide stiff opposition to the Asante. After initial reverses and great losses, the Asante–Wassa army had to be reinforced by the Twifo before they were able to defeat the Aowin in November 1715. The state was plundered and a heavy fine of £2,000 and several slaves imposed on the rulers.[2]

The defeat of Aowin was not the end of the Asante drive to the south-west. They would not be stopped until nothing divided them from the sea. They found an excuse to attack the Nzema at Cape Apolonia, accusing them of having supplied firearms to the Aowin. The advance of the Asante soldiers led the people to desert Apolonia and to flee to Assini. For the first time in Asante history its army gazed on the sea. Not only Apolonia, but all the windward coast

[1] N.B.K.G. 82, From Butler to Director-General and Council, 10 and 11 Oct. 1715. Butler gives another interesting account of the reasons for the Asante–Aowin war. He asserts that there was a succession dispute in Asante after the death of the king and that the rival claimants undertook the war to decide the issue. The vanquished party was to rule in Aowin.

For more about the flight of people into Aowin and Nzima see Reindorf, op. cit., p. 56; Ackah, 'Kaku Ackah and the split of Nzema', (M.A. thesis, Legon, 1965).

[2] N.B.K.G. 82, Axim, Butler to Elmina, 5 and 27 Nov. 1715; N.B.K.G. 82, Komenda, Landman to Elmina, 12 and 28 Oct. 1715. In Sept. 1715 Blenke reported from Sekondi that 'Zaay had asked Akaffo of Twifu to be ready to join the war with Awawin'. T70/1464, Komenda Diary, 13 Oct. 1715.

between Axim and Cape Palmas was thrown into turmoil. Each state stood in great fear, ignorant of where and when the Asante would strike again. What was more, rumours of an Asante onslaught on that coast were given credence when, after the Aowin war, a contingent of General Amankwa Tia's army camped at Egyira, ostensibly to punish John Konny of Ahanta.[1] Luckily for the states the Akyem threats to Asante, among other things, hurried Amankwa Tia and his men back home.

In spite of the withdrawal of the Asante the scare persisted. Preparations to put defences in order continued. Trade was reduced to the barest minimum. What was more, the need of defence made it difficult for people to be recruited for other things. Men were reluctant to be drawn out of their own state. This the Dutch experienced to their intense disappointment. They were unable to obtain local help in their war against Konny in 1718. Preoccupation with self-defence was soon to be justified. The Asante came down again in 1721. When Atkins was at Assini in that year he met the Apolonians who had been driven away getting ready to attack John Konny, whom they blamed for bringing down the Asante against them.[2] Thus by 1721 Asante influence and power had been felt on the western coast of the Gold Coast. In later years the Asante drive was towards the central and the eastern parts of the country. It should, however, be pointed out that the Asante drive to the coast in the early eighteenth century was for commercial rather than political reasons; they made no efforts to incorporate such regions into their empire either as provinces or as mere tribute-paying outposts. If anything, all they wanted was direct trade with the Europeans.

The first two decades of the eighteenth century were for the newly created Asante nation a period of wars. To be able to pursue its policies successfully it needed a direct and uninterrupted contact with the coast, whence the European goods, especially firearms, could be readily obtained. It must be noted, however, that the young nation could hardly engage itself in actual fighting on many fronts all the time. More often than not it needed to use its influence and the fear that its armies had created for itself. It had at times to rely on the goodwill of its neighbours and some of its tributary states, like

[1] N.B.K.G. 82, From Axim to Elmina, 9, 11, and 12 Dec. 1715; 8 Mar. 1716; T70/1464, From Komenda to Cape Coast, Jan. 1716.

[2] N.B.K.G. 82, From Butler to Elmina, 12 Dec. 1715; Atkins, 'Voyages and Travels', Astley, *Collections* ii. 554.

Wassa. Luckily for Asante the Europeans on the coast were more than anxious to cultivate its goodwill. This is clearly shown by the haste and urgency with which both the Dutch and the English tried to win the Asante king's friendship when he defeated Denkyira. Without the support of some of the Europeans on the coast, the Asante did not want to advance to the south. When Kwamina Coffee of Kabestera provoked them by blocking the passage to Cape Coast, Osei Tutu sought permission from Sir Dalby Thomas to bring his men against him.[1] When the General equivocated in his reply, nothing was done by the Asante. John Kabes of Komenda, for instance, was known to have acted in a rather provocative manner towards the Asante. On one occasion he seized a present of Aggrey beads that the Dutch had intended for the king. He kept them for two years and released them of his own accord. When in 1715 Kabes picked a quarrel with the Twifo that prevented the Asante traders from coming to Komenda, it was his respect for the king, and not the fear of his power, that led him to settle the dispute.

The success of the Asante in the early eighteenth century depended in considerable measure on the friendship of the influential African merchants on the coast, who saw their destinies inextricably interwoven with the fate of Asante. In spite of the fact that the Asante king's capital was located miles away from the coast, such traders took pride in any friendship they were able to forge with the kings. Although Agent Baillie would not believe in Kabes's vaunted friendship with the king, there was much point in the existence of an alliance of some sort. That the Asante traders should always come first to Kabes before going to the Europeans, the instance of the mysterious present in the form of a three-horned sheep which Kabes made to the king in 1715, and even more the possibility that Kabes supplied the Asante with guns at a reduced price, all this made such an alliance reciprocally beneficial. Another such ally and faithful friend was Konny of Ahanta, who was known to have sent masons and bricklayers to the Asante king and even to have spent part of his last days in Kumasi.[2]

The latter part of the seventeenth and the first twenty years of the eighteenth centuries may, in sum, be described as a period of great

[1] T70/5/35, Sept. 1708, T70/70/29, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 29 Dec. 1709.
[2] N.B.K.G. 82, From Axim to Elmina, 14 and 24 Jan., 8 Mar. 1718; T70/5/66, Sir Dalby Thomas to R.A.C., 12 Feb. 1709.

political developments on the Gold Coast. They witnessed the rise and, in some instances, the fall of larger states and empires such as Akwamu, Denkyira, and Asante. These rose from utter obscurity to become great imperial powers. They set the pace for development in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which was brought to a halt by the expansion of European imperialism into Africa. Denkyira and Akwamu were the pace-setters for the great Asante empire. But while, before 1701, Denkyira had been the most important state, which the competing European powers sought after, by 1709 it had lost its importance. Its genuine efforts to encourage free movement between the coast and the inland states were uncharitably and summarily dismissed as a mere 'brag . . . on purpose to draw us [the English] to trust them'.[1] At the same time the English were recommending such assorted presents as 'a plumed helmet, a field bed, scarlet and blue embroidered cloths to the kings of Asante and Akwamu'.

The breakthrough that Asante made into the politics of the southern states of the Gold Coast greatly upset the political equilibrium of the whole of the country. As with the growth of Denkyira and Akwamu, it was the unprecedented supply of arms brought to the coast by the European traders that hastened the growth of the Asante state. The introduction of European norms and the means to acquire them worked against the old political and social order based on kinship lines. The demand for slaves on the one hand, and, on the other, the desire for the newly introduced European consumer goods, made wars, raids, and counter-raids the order of the day. This led to the growth of large-scale empires. Larger groupings were necessary both for self-defence and also to derive the maximum benefits from the changed conditions. Weaker states found it politically wise to ally themselves with larger and stronger ones to avoid outright forceful incorporation. Through diplomacy, therefore, a state like Fante grew powerful, and came to dominate affairs on the central coastline and in its immediate hinterland. Fante became the principal partner in the confederacy of states comprising Fetu, Fante, Agona, and Assin. Its power was tacitly accepted by such a powerful state as Akwamu. The latter felt it necessary to ally itself with Fante to ensure that the Fante–Agona co-operation would never be used against Akwamu on its western border. But, even more, it was to prevent a *rapprochement* between Fante and Akyem,

[1] T70/26, Cape Coast Castle Accounts, Jan. 1707, 22 Oct. 1708.

which would have posed a great threat to Akwamu. Indeed, Akwamu sought and to some extent obtained a diplomatic isolation of Akyem. It allied itself with the powerful state of Asante to the north of Akyem. Thus assured of no troubles on its western border, Akwamu was able to pursue its policy of expansion to as far east as Whydah. However formidable the Akyem alliance with Denkyira might have been in the 1680s and the early 1690s, it became for all practical purposes, a spent force after 1701. Although it was able to defeat Asante in 1702 and caused consternation and panic at the courts of Akwamu and Asante, the alliance did not bear any fruitful results in the early eighteenth century.

As with many such political alliances, things began to fall apart. Cracks in the Asante–Akwamu alliance in 1717 and 1732 proved disastrous for both. In 1717 the Asante suffered a national disaster when their king was killed by the Akyem. And Asante's tacit support of Akyem ended in the fall of the Akwamu empire. Asante relations with some of its tributary states deteriorated. Wassa, the gold-rich country, became restive in the frequent wars it had to fight on Asante's behalf. What was more, powerful Asante was able to impose itself on Wassa. In 1716, for instance, when the Asante withdrew their support of the Wassa in their struggle with John Konny of Ahanta, the Wassa had to call off their projected attack on Pokoso. The relations between the two states continued to deteriorate in the course of time. This culminated in the incident of 1726 when Ntiforo, king of Wassa, was forced to flee his country and take protection with the English—an incident which led to two days of fighting between the Asante and the English.[1] The behaviour of Wassa was not an isolated instance. Asante had to fight many wars in the course of its history to extend and to preserve its empire. The history of the Gold Coast in the eighteenth century therefore may conveniently be viewed in terms of the activities of the Asante and their neighbours.

[1] T70/7/122, Franklin and Ross to R.A.C., 6 May 1726; T70/7/170, From Cape Coast Castle to R.A.C., 30 Nov. 1730. For the circumstances leading to the Akyem–Akwamu war and the fall of the Akwamu empire see Wilks, 'Akwamu' (M.A. thesis, Cardiff, 1958).